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ABSTRACT

This study examined the impact of linguistic and cultural diversity in two urban, British secondary schools on "how English looked" (the content and interactions of urban, multiethnic classrooms). Data were collected from two classrooms with diverse students using interviews and videotapes. In both classrooms, the teachers were working at mediating a text to the students. Both texts focused on relationships. Both lessons were led by the teacher, mainly from the front of the classroom, and involved the whole class working together for most of the period. The two teachers believed that their challenge was to make texts relevant to students' own experiences, though they went about this in different ways. In both classrooms, there was a significant congruence between the way in which the teacher viewed English and what she was producing in the English class and that which her students were able to make explicit during their interviews. (Contains 9 references.) (SM)



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The Production of Subject English and English Subjects: Lessons from Culturally Diverse Urban Classrooms

Jill Bourne

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Introduction

This paper has been developed in the context of a wider ESRC funded project called 'The School English Project', developed by an inter-university group of academics from the Universities of Keele, Southampton and the Institute of Education, London. As the Subjectivity in the School Curriculum Group, we have been working together for some years to attempt to unravel the complex interplay of policies, structures, cultures, values, and pedagogy taking place in the classroom context. Our current project, from which the data presented here is drawn, focuses on the production of English as a curriculum subject in 3 multi-ethnic urban schools across 9 UK classrooms, looking at the positioning of the students as subjects both learning English and as being, or becoming, themselves, English. In Bernstein's (1990) terms, we are looking at what is being relayed in the English classroom, including particular constructions of 'Englishness'.

The School English Project has collected data at three levels: that of the system, the school and the classroom. Methods being used involve national and school document analysis, and transcription and analysis of audiotaped interviews with teachers and students, and video taped observations in classrooms.

Members of the School English Project Group bring a variety of perspectives to the data and use a variety of research frameworks. I am particularly interested in looking at the impact of the students themselves on the classroom and their own perspectives on what takes place in it. This is research in progress, and so, in the paper that follows, I am alone responsible for any difficulties in the particular theoretical framework I am adopting here and for any infelicity in my analysis.

The construction of the subject

Edwards and Mercer (1987) argue that it is in the discourse between teacher and pupil that education is done or fails to be done- in the construction of 'common (or shared) knowledge'. But education regulates bodies and positions identities, as well as transmitting academic knowledge and skills. For Bernstein, pedagogic discourse, the discourse of knowledge and skills is always embedded within a discourse of social order, so that the latter always dominates. Schooling is a powerful arena for secondary cultural transmission and socialisation.

In my previous work on classroom interaction (see 'Man schreibt, wie man spricht' edited by Gogolin and Kroon, 2001), I have worked from the framework offered by Bernstein (1990), which sees instances of classroom interaction as the meeting place of discourses drawn from, or 'dislocated and relocated' in Bernstein's terms, from the different fields of policy and of the subject discipline, these 'top down' and powerful discourses colliding in the classroom with the 'bottom up' discourses brought by the participants, pupils and teachers, located in their social, cultural and political histories. Bernstein's model suggests that transactions in the classroom are influenced by the responses of students, who bring their own cultural understandings to the classroom.

In this paper, I want to consider what impact the diversity of linguistic and cultural backgrounds found in urban schools today have on 'how English looks', on the content and interactions of urban multiethnic classrooms. I want to look for certain points, critical moments, when these 'other' cultural understandings emerge in the classroom interaction, and

also look to the student interviews for what they reveal about student understandings of what has been and is being transmitted in the English classroom, and how far these match those of the teachers.

English as a curriculum subject

A number of researchers have outlined tensions between two views of English which have co-existed since before the introduction of the national curriculum in 1988, on the one hand a 'restorationist curriculum' (Ball, 1995, p.99) focusing on the teaching of high culture, the best that has been thought and read, and through its selection of texts and forms of analysis attempting to recreate a 'past of English cultural unity', with 'ethnic and cultural diversity made invisible by the recomposition of Englishness' (ibid, p.96). On the other hand, and growing in strength more recently, with the New Labour government's introduction of a central strategy for the teaching of Literacy, there is also a Neo-Liberal focus on the English as essentially about skills development- or English as 'Communications'. In this focus, too, cultural and social diversity are rendered redundant - for where only certain skills are assessed and valued, difference easily becomes a deficit.

As Reid (2000) points out, conflicting views of what should be taught under the heading 'English' and of how it should be taught, are not simply technical questions, but about values, about alternative views of the kind of country and citizens the education system aims to shape. There is at least a much more encouraging rhetoric of valuing diversity in the 1999 National Curriculum for English: for example, examining how familiar themes are explored in different cultural contexts, the distinctive qualities of literature in different traditions, and acknowledging the different views held by students within the classroom.

Teacher actions in the classroom, of course, are not simply responses to the pressures of national policies and are produced through the social, cultural and political history of the pedagogy of the subject, transmitted through training and through membership in the 'community of practice' within the profession. The professional association for teachers of English in the UK (NATE) claims there are three common assumptions shared by members: first, that there is a body of knowledge and a set of practices related to the teaching and learning of English which guide teachers' experiences: 'a collective memory that shapes our profession', shapes classroom practice and provides teachers with their professional identity. At heart, this is 'a view of learning that is interactive and social, that "leaves room for the unforeseen", the development of new knowledge' (Ellis, 2001). Opposed to this is a conception of teachers as 'short term delivery mechanisms', implementing pre-determined curricula, with pre-determined objectives which run the risk of 'excluding student's own unforeseen contributions to the learning that takes place' (Fox, 2001). Students and teachers must, in this view, negotiate meanings, and in doing so, make them explicit. In relation to literature, the aim is for students to 'examine human relationships and confront moral dilemmas'; to 'construct interpretations of the world which help to dispel some of the confusion, frustration and uncertainty they so often feel about their place in it' (Goody, 2001, p.19). The English teaching profession thus sees itself as having a strong 'moral' and social mission, a view shared by both teachers in this study.

Between the powerful demands of national curriculum assessment and a strongly held commitment to peer professional values as expressed above, the teachers in the two classrooms under study designed their teaching, and teachers and pupils together produced the classroom interactions we call lessons. In these lessons, the focus on the examination of human

relationships and moral dilemmas appears to be at the forefront of the teachers' agendas, although the requirements of the national curriculum show themselves in the pace of the lessons, and its impact in the consequent lack of space for student contributions.

There are almost no interventions initiated by the students themselves in either lesson. In this paper I want to look in some detail at two critical incidents, one in each classroom, where student intervention did impinge on the teachers' agendas, requiring teacher response

First, some necessary contextual detail.

The student intake of the 2 classrooms

The students in the classes studied were all 14- 15 years old. Both classes were situated in urban multi-ethnic schools, with a student intake drawn from a variety of ethnic group backgrounds. It is important for us not to stereotype students by 'other' assigning ethnic labels and the expectations that go along with these. In a large scale survey of people of minority ethnic group background Madood et al (1997) found that the majority both said they thought of themselves both as being a member of their minority group and also as being British. (Whether this has changed since the consequences of the events and aftermath of September 11th 2001, is a moot point, but our fieldwork was completed before summer 2001.) Madood et al argue that this self-ascription of ethnicity may involve the adoption of distinctive cultural traits, but is 'primarily an expression of "whom one belongs with", of membership... it is possible for people to have a sense, even a strong sense, of minority identity without participation in many distinctive cultural practices' (p.332). There seems likely to have been as much variety of differences in lifestyles *within* as well as *between* ethnic groups in these urban young people. However, although students acted within the classroom in similar ways, as urban teenagers, some students marked cultural affiliations in dress in Teacher B's school (for example, some wearing Afghan hats, headscarfs), and in Teacher A's school, where school uniform was compulsory, by their attention to sometimes elaborate hairstyles. Other than these semiotic markers, our information on the students comes from the perceptions of the teachers, and are matched in interesting ways by the different ways the students in each school describe themselves.

Teacher B was by background a teacher of English as a foreign language overseas, and had worked for many years as a teacher of English as an additional language within English schools. This interest in language was reflected in her description of her class. She described her class as mainly Bangladeshi, and predominately male. In addition there were some students of African origin and a few from various parts of the European mainland. There were very few monolingual English students. Three or four students were newly arrived in England. The teacher saw the students as 'straddling their two or three cultures sometimes very successfully'. The student group of four pupils interviewed by our researcher from Teacher B's class identified themselves variously by language as well, for example as 'reading Arabic, but I can speak in Bengali, Hindi and Hindustani'; 'read in Arabic, understand Hindi and a bit of Punjabi and Bangladeshi'; speak 'just English and Bengali'; speak 'English, Italian and some Spanish', sharing their teacher's focus on their linguistic identity.

Teacher A described her class in terms of cultural background and levels of attainment. Her background was as a youth worker on a project attempting to raise the attainment of Afro-Caribbean youth who were having difficulties at school. Her first engagement with teaching, then, was political, being a Black Caribbean woman herself, only later going on to train as a

teacher. She retained a powerful interest both in the impact of cultural difference on learning, and on students' attainment. There was a wide range of cultural backgrounds within the class, she said. On entry to the school at 11 years old, many children had been '2 years behind their reading ages'. However, the school achieved considerable success by the time of final school leaving examinations. She felt the school worked hard to make students feel that there were 'strengths in being different', and to respect and learn from each other's cultures. The student group interviewed from Teacher A's class described their own ethnic origins in terms of 'race', as follows: 'Half Black'; 'Quarter English, quarter Indian'; 'Afro-English'; 'Black'; 'Mixed race'. One boy described himself as a 'Black guy with a lot of sense and street knowledge'. Again, a remarkable symmetry between students' self-ascriptions of identity and the interests of their teacher.

The lesson content and objectives

THEME: Love, marriage

Text:

Teacher A: 'Teresa's Wedding' by William Trevor (Curriculum focus: 'Wider Reading')

Teacher B: Romeo and Juliet, by William Shakespeare (Curriculum focus: A Shakespeare Play)

Aim: to develop students' interpretative skills, providing evidence from the text to justify their interpretations of characters, their feelings and motives.

Skills training: 'annotation', the preparation of marginal notes on texts, to be used in writing essays or preparing for examinations.

Method:

Teacher A: Whole class, teacher led.

Teacher B: Whole class teacher led instructions preparing the class for group work, although group work in fact only took place in the last 10 minutes of the lesson.

In the lessons I am commenting on in this paper, both teachers were working at mediating a text to the students. Both texts focus on relationships, in the one, falling in love, in the meeting of Romeo and Juliet, by William Shakespeare- following the requirement for all students to study a Shakespeare play; in the other, marriage as portrayed in a short story by William Trevor: 'Teresa's Wedding', responding to the requirement for all students to be able to demonstrate 'wider reading'. In both lessons, the teachers' explicit aim was to develop students' interpretative skills, providing evidence from the text to justify their interpretations of characters, their feelings and motives. There was also alongside this skills training in a wider classroom practice, that of 'annotation', the preparation of marginal notes on texts, to be used in writing essays or preparing for examinations. In both classrooms, the work on the texts over a sequence of weeks would lead to the requirement for the students to write an assessed essay - and this underlying purpose was known by the students.

Both lessons were teacher led, mainly from the front of the classroom, and involved the whole class working together for the majority of the lesson period. For both, there is an emphasis on the analysis of character, and how this is constructed and conveyed by the texts. For both, the aim is to develop students' ability to provide textual evidence to justify their interpretations of

text. This is a requirement of the syllabus. For both, the main resource is not a book, but a number of photocopied pages of the text, wrenched from the context of their surrounding text, and presented for study.

The question is, what is happening when these narratives are remade in classroom discourse? For the lessons are very different. For Teacher B, the lesson consists of reconstructing in casual speech a narrative rendering of a complex text by Shakespeare prior to the class reading the text. For Teacher A, it is in interrogating and interpreting the deeper meanings of a short story with the whole class. Thus, although both teachers are working with the same age group, conforming to the same national curriculum, and on similar objectives (using evidence from the text to justify interpretations, character analysis), their approaches derive not simply from the uses of different texts or in relation to differences in their student intake, but in relation to values, purposes and beliefs. However tight the curriculum specifications, they remain to a certain extent malleable in their implementation within the classroom.

Teacher B and first transcript

Analysis of the video data alongside interviews with the teacher show Teacher B to see her students as needing support, especially in relation to Shakespeare, where she believes they will find the language hard. She says to them at one point in the reading of the text: 'I wonder how much you understood of that?' ... She therefore sees her main teaching role in this lesson as mediating the text, translating it into casual everyday language. Hers is a progressive pedagogy (Bernstein 1990), with students 'negotiating their own meanings' in independent group work, her own role just being the explication of vocabulary and the basic narrative. She wants students to see the text as relating to their own everyday lives, and will reinforce this by later asking them to dramatise the text, so that they themselves take on Shakespeare's 'voice' and embody his characters in their own actions.

Her overall goals in teaching English, she says, are twofold: firstly to encourage enjoyment of literature, secondly to help students to 'communicate their needs' both orally and in writing - 'its like their voice that they need, so its very much about empowering students to have at least a competent level of communication'.

Her response to the diversity in cultural backgrounds in the classroom, she tells our interviewer, leads her to focus in her teaching on drawing out universal themes, not rooted in any particular historical or cultural context. She says: 'I think there is that idea that you are going to bring in references to different cultures. But the materials we use are not terribly diverse, they are absolutely classical, what you would find in any English Department up and down the country'. She feels that students 'straddle their two or three cultures sometimes very successfully' and that therefore what they need is 'good quality literature and examples, with universal themes, because that is what literature is, they can all relate to those.' At the same time, she says that sometimes 'you have to create an ethos in the school where it is fine for everybody to talk about different cultures.'

There is only one point in the whole class section of the lesson where a student's intervention requires her to respond in unexpected ways, to 'design' her teaching in immediate response to her students - I have identified this as a 'critical incident'. The teacher is taking the students through the first meeting of Romeo and Juliet at the Capulet's ball - where Shakespeare makes the young lovers use the metaphor of a pilgrim to describe their ardent feelings towards one another, and their mounting excitement as they grow closer to a kiss.

As the teacher works through the Romeo and Juliet extract before the students read it aloud, she asks:

T: Can anyone tell me what a pilgrim is?

Mickey: Yeah, that's a Haj thing.

Boy 2: A traveller.

T: That's a Haj thing. OK. (*Turning to Boy 2*) It's a certain kind of travel, a journey. Mickey, can you explain?

Mickey: What a Haj is?

T: Yes, OK.

Mickey: They have to put on clothes, they have to walk round the Ka'aba, and then they have to throw stones at a pillar, and then they have to kill an animal.

T: OK.

(A number of students laugh.)

T: (Reassuringly) I think that's very good, right. Now (looking round the class) the people again who have experienced that can see whether Mickey's, um, Mickey's account of the Haj is correct. That's very good, Mickey. You did well. Because now....

When I first watched the video, I thought this was the one single instance in the whole lesson in which students brought their own home cultural knowledge to the classroom to illuminate their learning. However, I believe this is not the correct interpretation. The extract continues:

Boys: (indistinguishable - some disagreement)

Mickey: We did that just now in last lesson with Mr. W.

T: Well, I'll ask Mr. W. as well about it. You obviously learnt a lot there.

Now, a pilgrim is somebody who goes, as Waseed said, to a holy place. Makes a special journey to a holy place. Such as Mecca. (*Nods*) And it's an act of devotion - religious devotion. To show your duty to God.

And often in that place - and I mean (*looking around the classroom*), there are other sites of pilgrimage around the world - in the Christian religion, in the Catholic religion - Lourdes, for example, is a place people go to be healed, with holy water. Canterbury used to be, um, possibly still is, a seat of pilgrimage, because it's the big Canterbury Cathedral, the seat of the Archbishop of Canterbury.

Boy: Or the Ganges.

T: The Ganges. Right. So you understand perfectly, some people have even experienced it.

(*Looks back at pink worksheet*) So they talk a lot about a pilgrim and pilgrimages and talk about their love as if it were a religion. So maybe what they are doing - they are giving it this solemnity, they are giving it a very serious weight. But maybe they feel a need to do that because it is so sudden. So... (*Moves into instructions for group work*)

In the extract, we see a student offering not home knowledge, as I first thought, but school knowledge. The boy has just learnt about a Haj in an earlier Religious Education lesson. Indeed, he is not himself a Muslim, which may account for the other students' alertness and interest when he offers his account - they all raise their heads and watch him, apparently with some amusement on the part of some. Although there is some informal disagreement among his fellow students, many of whom are Muslim themselves, alternative descriptions of a Haj drawing on out-of-school knowledge are not pressed forward by the students, and are not followed up by the teacher, suggesting these are seen by all participants, both students and teacher, as not legitimate in this context; they belong to 'Religious Education', not to 'English'. The teacher is clearly disconcerted for a moment by the offering which seems to have no direct connection to the Romeo and Juliet context, and to offer little help in understanding the text. She also accepts but does not follow up the reference to the Ganges. She moves on, but first quickly draws in reference to other religious pilgrimages she knows of - to show it is not culturally specific but 'universal' - and so something that all groups in the class can identify with. However, in doing so, she loses the opportunity to consider what the deeper meaning of a pilgrimage or Haj might mean to Romeo and Juliet in their time. The pilgrimage becomes at best something of 'solemnity', which loses the sense of mounting excitement nearing the site of the pilgrimage has to the truly religious, for example among pilgrims at Mecca or the Ganges, or in the early church for Christian worshippers. At worst

the meaning is trivialised as a tourist visit to see Canterbury- which does not add a lot to the understanding of the sonnet! There is no debate or disagreement within the class, awkwardness is quickly bridged and consensus on legitimate meaning achieved.

The students in Teacher B's class

Students in Teacher B's class have taken on her perspective on what English is as a subject. Asked what is English, students interviewed reply that it is 'based on real life'; 'like real, that would interest everybody'. One says: 'Times may change...but the fact is, the values are the same'. In interview, students do relate the text to their real lives. Another picks up the universal theme more explicitly, 'The interesting thing is he talks about the human nature - his things are based on it - its all happening now this, isn't it?' One explains further: 'The fighting between two families, that still happens in a lot of places, and the love story'. 'In Muslim religions if you are going out with a girl or boy...if you really love them...but that is when hatred and conflict comes in and he talks about, Shakespeare writes about it and he puts his knowledge in the book. It is very interesting.' 'You end up feeling you know'. English, then, for these students, helps them to interpret their own lives and the lives of real people around them in certain ways legitimated by the school and the dominant society.

They are very clear about how English works for them. When our interviewer asked them what was different about English and other curriculum subjects such as science, one responded:

'In science you can speak English, read English, but what you are being taught from a science teacher is different...because you are learning about the outside world. In English it is very different...<In English you learn about> the inside, I guess, about society and culture'.

Teacher A and the second transcript

Teacher A, like Teacher B, sees as her challenge making the texts relevant to the students' own experience. 'We are trying to prepare them for the world' she says, 'for some things they possibly might encounter later in life. It may be they look back at some experience in the classroom and say 'I've come across this before...It is life experience for them.'

However, her starting point is a recognition of fundamental inequalities in society, along lines of class, 'race' and gender, which her role is to address. She sees her students not simply as individuals, but positioned in the social structure. She says: 'We are talking about a subtly class divided society where our children in the past, in a school like this one, would not have been able to structure a letter in the way they should, because people were only concerned with 'creativity' - they must be able to learn to write, to communicate, that is what it is all about.'

Her teaching style is formal, to provide students, she says, with a framework, but within this, she focuses hard on being fair to all. She is aware that what she is teaching is more fundamental than just literature. 'If the class say to me, 'Miss you are being unfair' I just sit and think - have I been biased in any way, because they are learning through how you treat them, so there are all these other Englishes, ...being aware how to treat people in a multi-cultural society.' Basic to this is teaching students to manage diversity:

'<You have to> let children see that there wasn't anything wrong with being different - you have strengths being different, strengths being similar, and it is a complexity really of the classroom in that you have to get every child to respect each other's culture'.

'You have to look at stereotypes...for example, we have to let students realise <in Teresa's Wedding> that the Irish has their own culture...to do with their religious beliefs and so on. ...The story does not take on any meaning until we actually come to the place that it is set, and then we begin to see cultural and social aspects...I say 'Do you realize what this place is - this is Ireland, and what about their religious beliefs?' and then they come in with their own experience. ...'

In working on the short story in this lesson, she aims to get students to read critically, 'They have to be able to understand how things are put together and to *see inside*'; to read '*at the heart of the text*'. She uses whole class dialogic enquiry as her teaching strategy, involving her students in constructing the lesson through question and answer around the room, but driving a firm teaching agenda of her own, bringing the lesson in on time and making the points she wants them to know. For much of the lesson she is static, seated formally and upright behind her desk. The students attempt to respond to her equally formally, this is not casual conversation. In the critical incident I want to analyse today, however, her physical posture changes as, I suggest, she hands over interpretation to the class, asking them to help her to understand what might drive the actions of a particular social group, one she does not belong to, men.

TEACHER A EXTRACT

Teacher: And then we have this revelation. What is the major revelation in this story? Put your hands up. (*Standing, arm gestures*) What happens towards the end, when the wedding celebrations are coming to an end? We're then told something that's like a set back to the married couple. What's the thing that we discover?

Rehana: She slept with another man.

T: Screw Doyle, yes. (*Fiddles with hair, voice becomes more reflective*) But even so, you question yourself, you know, ah...

(*At this point teacher's physical presentation of self changes - her voice becomes less certain; she touches her hair, adjusts her clothing, sits on edge of table. She physically seems to 'hand over' to the students some of her authority*)

Students: (arguing over page reference) 'No its not'; 'It is'

T: Hold on. Its Screw Doyle who's telling, he's in a (*Sits perched on a desk*) kind of a...its quite <indistinguishable>

Darcus: He's acting like its a conquest. Like he's...

T: He's showing off.

Darcus: Yeah

T: And this is the thing now. We're looking at how

Rehana: Men act.

T: Men act. Towards - its like sometimes they're together (*draws line on white board next to her*) in this set, and sometimes the women are there (*points to one side of line*), and the men there (*points to other side of line*). You see that? Alright. OK - sometimes in separate (*points to either side of line on the board*). In the setting of the story (*draws a circle with finger around the diagram for men and women*). Sometimes women grouped in one place (*points*) and men in the other (*points*). (*Turns to face the class*) OK. Screw Doyle/ is Artie's/ friend. (*Thinks, hand to mouth; pause*) This is Artie's wedding day. And he's learnt something.

Boy: (*indistinguishable*)

T: Yes, er Darcus has had enough time - somebody else read out. OK have you found it?

Boy: (*Reads passage*)

T: Alright. (*Pause*) Would - what's wrong with that? What makes you feel - what is wrong with Screw Doyle telling Artie on his wedding day? Would you have expected...

Rehana: Why didn't he do it before?

Students: (*a number speak, indistinguishable*)

Teacher: Keep your hands up, keep your hands up. OK, Christopher, what were you going to say? And then Peter. Keep your hands up.

Chris: Its like Peter says - he's saying 'I was there first', like, something.

Students: Yes.

T: Is this a male thing then? Do you not find it um, quite....

Darcus: He's disrupting them, I think.

Rehana: It's like a game.

T: Mm, its like women (*points to whiteboard*) and men (*points to other side of board*). Men feel free to talk about their conquests.

Rehana: Disrespect.

T: Disrespectful. (*Stretches arm out pointing at the girl, signals up and down for repetition from her*)

Rehana: Disrespect (*T nods, still arm outstretched, pointing to her, signalling for more*)

Student: Disloyal

T: Disloyal (*nods*)

Darcus: But the women have...

Rehana: But the men have all these expectations of women, but the women never have any expectations of men.

T: (*smiles*) Ah. Alright! Hold on to that. Marissa? Sh, Christopher.

Marissa: Its, like, when he, remember when he said he don't want to sit next to her? He's only blaming Teresa and....

Boy: (*interrupts, some indistinguishable*).... equality between men and women.

Darcus: Ah, I like that, equality.

Rehana: (*Claps her hands*)

T: Who takes responsibility for this? Right? Did you notice that Artie was, er, incensed at the idea of Teresa going with Screw Doyle? (*Leans forward*) But when Screw Doyle told him, on his wedding night, (*holds up finger*) he wasn't upset with Screw Doyle. How would you have felt? Put your hands up - as males (*leans back, hands apart*) in this room -if it had been your wedding night, Christopher, and somebody had revealed that about your bride? (*Standing, arm outstretched*) How would you react? Your friend, you know. Your good friend! Who told you.

Chris: (*Hits one fist into hand, laughing*)

Darcus: Its quite old fashioned, because now I don't think we'd be like, 'oh, yeah...'

T: (*Crosses classroom away from Darcus*) Come on, how do you think you would have reacted to your best.... Ssh. Come on, let's be serious. (*Raps on table*) Let's be serious.

Boy: I would have felt quite angry. If it was way before the marriage, yeah, I simply wouldn't have gone through with the wedding, because, thats, thats...

Rehana: (*indistinguishable*)

T: Peter! Peter! Screw Doyle - (*points*) Jemima, remind him what, er - Peter, listen! Jemima, remind him what Screw Doyle said to Artie at that moment (*bending towards her, nodding*), and when did - yes, go on.

Jemima: Screw Doyle told Artie that it was a couple of years ago.

Rehana: Yeah, yeah - he made it sound like it was <*indistinguishable*>, yeah.

T: (*Stands back, broad smile, holds hand out, palm up*) But this is what I'm saying...
<*Students all talk at once*>

Rehana: He'll start to think the baby is not his. He'll start to think the baby's Screw Doyles. It all becomes more than it actually is.

T: Of course. (*Sits back on table, touches hair*) So you see how men then draw a kind of - you know - a kind of - there's a line between male and female, it seems, because (*points to white board*) the men, you know, becaus the men - Some men might possibly become violent towards Screw Doyle.

Rehana: Yes, but why...? I think he's...

T: (*points*) Marcus?

Marcus: I think he's like, stirring (*stirs wrist*). I think he's stirring, because why, if he was going to tell him - if it did happen years ago, he could have told him then. But, if he decided to tell him on the night of the wedding...

T: So, why wasn't he angry with his friend?

Marcus: Don't know.

T: Right, that's what I'm saying. Peter?

Peter: He probably - its true, it is different between men and women. (*Stretches out his arm, pointing at the teacher, shaking fingers up and down, just as she had earlier pointed in excitement*) But also, a friend - yeah, he's been his friend for years. Her, he didn't even love her too much.

Students: No

Peter: Its not, its not...*(holds arms apart, signalling 'giving up')*

Rehana: Its his pride, its his pride. He's damaged his pride, hasn't he. Its a male thing. Its not..

Students: *(All talking at once, Peter turned to the boys behind him, still arguing his point, teacher lets them, waits)*

Rehana *(to Peter)* What, if he doesn't love her it doesn't matter too much!

T: *(Raising voice)* So men can behave in a certain way? That is acceptable.

(She now leans back, hand on her knee, sceptically/seductively)

Students: No! No!

T: But a woman can't? He was cross with Teresa. Didn't even want to sit next to her, on the bus. Do you remember?

Marcus: No - where does it say that?

T: Look at your story. Didn't affect his relationship, friendship, with Screw Doyle. That's a men thing. *(Leans forward and raises voice)* And you boys will need to examine sometimes how you behave towards girls, even in school as well. Yes?

Marcus: But I think - no, you've got us wrong.

T: *(Standing, smiles, change of voice back to usual formal style)* Alright, so he learns the truth. So, Jemima, find the bit where he is enlightened, further *(resumes upright sitting position)* as to when this relationship actually took place, alright? Later on Artie discovers the truth. Christopher, have you found it?

Chris: *(reads paragraph)*

(Teacher is now sitting again, the focus is back on the text. Students still contribute, but the debate is over.)

There are interesting rhetorical devices in this extract: the use of question and answer, but also reiteration of answers, the demand from the teacher for pace, for digging deeper into the meaning. By partially handing over to the students, she engenders debate, which is risky as she has to manage and control it. At the moment when 'Peter' challenges her, he again adopts similar hand gestures to her own, more urgent gestures as she encourages them to dig for meaning. His interpretation is interesting and, to me, convincing - he makes a claim for the loyalty of long term friendship among men, an interpretation shared by many of the boys in the room. Again, the teacher's posture changes: she counters him less as a teacher, for the minute, but as a grown and powerful woman, before reverting to teacher and moral authority, ending the interchange with 'And you boys will need to examine sometimes how you behave towards girls, even in school as well'. His interpretation stands, one among many, but the moral lesson is driven home. This lesson should be seen in the context of current debate within the Black community and in the press on the problematic relationship of Black males to women and to the family, issues that the class would be well aware of.

In the extract, the teacher uses a range of semiotic resources to engender and extend debate and analysis, including her own body. Her moral and social purposes are clear. As she says:

'I firmly believe that you are creating the citizen for the future - you touch the intellect but sometimes you touch the emotions as well ... I suppose it is a romantic view really you are striving for, amore humane understanding of the world, creating a different world where people don't judge you so much by your differences and see those are things that can enrich society.'

The students in Teacher A's class

Again, as with Teacher B's class, there is a remarkable congruence between the way in which the teacher sees English and what she is producing in the English class, and that which her students are able to make explicit in interview. Students explained that English 'prepares you for the future' by helping you 'look at the deeper meaning'. 'You could look at something and don't pay much attention to it. English, you can go deeper into it'. 'You can hear other people's idea, take your own into consideration and evaluate it all up and then sort of understand it.' Through English they felt they were helped to understand different cultures,

recognising that 'even though people have different values, people have the same sorts of feelings.'

The power of language in addressing inequality and in determining their future lives was very clear to them. They said that 'In English we feel we have got respect', 'we voice our opinions...we are allowed to talk and say what we feel'. Nevertheless, they were required to learn to speak formally and explicitly: 'She will stop us and say 'no, look what do you mean by that? Don't talk like that, say that sentence again'. Another explained: 'I don't think she minds us talking how we talk *because that is us* but she wants us to know when to stop.' They saw this as preparation for future lives when they would be likely to face discrimination and injustice.

Student 1: She will use her own experiences. She has told us a lot about herself like when she went on trial...

Student 2: In the jury.

Student 1: And she was telling us the man who was being charged, he didn't do it and she looked at the meaning of it.

Student 2: Because when I went to court the other day, I was doing work experience that made me notice and I looked at the jury and there were a lot of white people and like 2 black guys and I thought straight away what Miss W. had said and I looked at the guy who was being convicted, looked at his colour and then I thought 'you ain't got a chance'.

Interviewer: Was he black?

Student 2: Yes.

Student 1: Miss said she wasn't the only black person on the jury but she did actually voice herself.

These students, through English and through the role model the teacher offered as a critical interpreter of the text, believed they were learning to '*voice themselves*' in powerful ways, and to understand the workings of power in everyday English society.

Voicing oneself in this context does not mean leaving students to find some inner well of personal expression. Students in the first classroom, Teacher B's class, also realise that there is some form of expression, ways of meaning, which are not the same in casual speech. - a student in Teacher B's class tells us 'I'll have to get my sentence from my book'. But for them the genre is not easily accessible within the independent group work they are offered. In contrast, through modelling in the whole class setting, Teacher A offers her students access to the discourses of analysis and interpretation, part of the wider genre network of schooling. Rather than a progressivist 'invisible pedagogy', and although in style having the appearance of a conservative pedagogy, this approach begins to illustrate the possibility of the development of a 'radical visible pedagogy', which Bernstein 1990 defines as focusing on coming to an understanding of your own position in society, through coming to an understanding of the relationship *between* social groups, and through this new appreciation, the ability to change practice' (p.72). Such an engaged pedagogy would have the potential to transform doing as well as being English.

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